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Appropriations Committee—DDS
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My name is Abu Bakr and I live in Hamden where I work as a home care worker. I am here today to talk about the real-life challenges my clients and I see in the DDS home care services. I appreciate the strong support the Appropriations Committee has provided to DDS in-home services, however the Governor's proposed budget doesn't keep up with my clients' needs.

For the past 4 years, I've worked providing home care for two people with developmental disabilities who receive money from DDS and "self-direct" their home care services. One of them recently moved into his own residence, and I work helping him to pay his bills, go shopping, and make it to doctors' appointments. With my other client, he has more physical challenges, and I take him to therapy and I teach him basic life skills. I am there to foster and support them in their independence in any way they need.

But there are challenges, both for my clients and for me.

One of my clients lost 6 hours per week due to a cut in his DDS waiver services budget, which meant a schedule shift for both me and him. It was an adjustment for him to expect me at a different time of day, and whatever we did together had to be more prompt and precise --- he felt I was rushing him, but I couldn't exceed the hours I was allotted. Additionally, we can't always control the timing or length of doctors' appointments or therapy, which makes it difficult to fit all the needed appointments into a smaller window each week. He wants more time with

me for his activities, but without additional budget funding, he is stuck at home.

That budget cut also meant I lost 6 hours of income per week, which was significant. My work is through the State of Connecticut's DDS waiver program, and is paid for by the State. With both my clients, I am paid just \$13 and \$15.50 an hour respectively, and there are no benefits. As a result, I have to take on a third overnight client – I am working 75 hours a week just to make ends meet. How can home care workers provide DDS clients with the best-possible care when we must work every day and night?

Another challenge that is not addressed is the fact that the State of Connecticut does not provide a group workers' comp insurance policy to protect these DDS home care clients and the caregivers who serve them. So clients must buy expensive individual insurance policies, paying for it from their DDS budget, if they want to protect themselves from an injury lawsuit or if they want to hire a home care worker for more than 26 hours a week. One of my clients pays for workers' comp out of his DDS services budget so that he can hire me full-time to care for him, but there are many other basic needs that he could spend that slice of his DDS budget on to help him live more fully.

In closing, this work is a labor of love for me, but we need your support to ensure safe, high-quality care for DDS clients and home care workers alike. Please go beyond the Governor's budget proposal and provide the full funding needed for DDS home care services and our individual clients' budgets to make sure their needs are met.